

with all his men and horses intact, having carried fire and sword into a hostile country, and marched 106 miles in six days.

He threw a scare into the Confederates that made their lines quiver from Huntersville to Winchester and from Top Allegheny to Staunton.

Scouts rode headlong in every direction carrying dispatches. They seem to have agreed on the strength of the Federal army as being 5,000 men instead of the 738 that it actually was.

From--1928 West Virginia Blue Book

by Andrew Price

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Chapter 4
section 4b-3

Battle of Top Allegheny

Dec. 13, 1861.

The battle of Top Allegheny was fought in Pocahontas county on December 13, 1861 between the forces of the Union under General R. H. Milroy, and the forces of the confederates under General W. W. Loring. Col. Edward Johnson commanding.

The two companies had camped within sight of each other since July 13, 1861 the day the Federals had occupied Whites Top of Cheat. For five months they had watched each others camp fires rise. During this five months they had fought the battle at Travelers Repose on Oct. 3 and had also had another skermish at this same place on Oct. 31, 1861. Both times the Federals had been driven back to their camp on Cheat Mountain.

There had been other minor skermishes throughout the summer and Autumn. The Federal camp was known officially as Camp Cheat Mountain Summit. The Confederate camp was known as Camp Baldwin, in honor of a confederate soldier of that name. Between these two camps was Camp Bartow at Travelers Repose. The Confederates had made a winter camp on top Allegheny Montain by erecting log cabins.

As you go along the road now you can see piles of stone at regular intervals which represent the chimneys of the cabins. You can see the trenches and fortifications on Allegheny also at Cheat and Bartow. The top of Allegheny is a wind-swept pasture land, and the pike lies for some miles through this level table-land. In making the attack, the Federals had to climb up the side of the mountain and fight on the top of this table-land.

The advance on December 12th found Camp Bartow at Travelers Repose deserted, but Mayor D. H. Ross of the 52nd Virginian had been dispatched to that point with 106 men to form an ambuscade on the road between Durbin and Bartow.

When the Federals came up, Ross and his men fired on them and killed 10 and wounded a number of others. The Federals advanced in great force and Ross was forced to retreat. He reached Camp Baldwin that night.

Ambrose Bierce was with the Federals. He says they marched all day down Cheat Mountain and all night up Allegheny Mountain. That the firing at the foot of the mountain halted them for a time, but after the Confederates retreated they reached Travelers Rest. There they divided. About half of them marched down the road toward Greenbank and turned at the Uriah Heavener farm and climbed the road that is still used as a short cut between Saulsbury Run and Buffalo Run. The other half continued up the pike.

As the battle was scheduled to begin before day break those killed at Bartow were not buried but laid on the upper side of the road and covered with blankets. As the soldiers passed that way many of them stopped to see if they could recognize a friend among the dead.

The next day as they returned from the battle ground defeated and approached the place where the dead lay it seemed they had moved and cast aside their covering. But upon investigation they found a drove of hogs had been at the bodies and eaten the faces off the dead. The hogs were killed and the dead buried. "This scene is described in Iconoclastic Memories of the Civil War-Ambrose Bierce".

When the turnpike gets to within a mile of the top of this mountain, it makes a sharp turn to the south and from there it climbs gently to the top where it passes a church. The Federal army left the pike at this curve and climbed directly up the hillside hoping to get behind the camp. But there were pickets out and the camp was alarmed by their shots around 4 o'clock that morning. The Confederates marched several companies out to meet the Federals as they came at the top. The Federals waited in the edge of the forest until near daylight and then marched into the open field and then the firing became general.

The Confederate line swung back and forward, and at one stage of the battle their right flank was driven to take shelter in their log cabins. There was fighting all over the top until mid afternoon, The half of the army which had swung to the south and was advancing up the crest of Buffalo Ridge failed in its purpose of surprising the camp. On that side of the camp there were trenches prepared to guard both roads and there was also some good artillery.

These trenches were full of soldiers prepared for an emergency. However, when the Federals first appeared, Captain Anderson of the Lee Battery thought it was a band of pickets being driven in. He sprang upon the side of the trench and called to them to hurry up and get in to the trenches. He was instantly shot and killed.

Finally about mid afternoon a retreat was sounded and the Federal army made its way back to camp Cheat Mountain. The Confederates reported that 1,200 Confederates had repulsed an army of 5000 men. That it was a great battle and a great victory.

The Federals reported that they had 1,760 men and the Confederates had 2,500, and that it was a reconnaissance in force. J. P. Benjamin, Sec. of War, wrote that President Jefferson Davis having been informed of the valor of Col. Edward Johnson in repulsing a vastly superior force was much gratified at the news of success, and had made him a brigadier general.

The losses of the battle were: Federal-dead 20, wounded 107, missing 10, total 137.

Confederate- dead 20, wounded 98, missing 28, total 146. After this battle the troops went into winter quarters, and there was no more fighting on the Staunton and Parkersburg turnpike that winter.

From - W. Va. Blue Book 1928
By, Andrew Price.

According to the old timers who have heard relatives tell about their winter in camp on the Allegheny, they were about to starve.